What to expect and do after ear canal surgery

Pain Management

- **Expected Symptoms:** Mild to moderate ear pain, pressure, popping, crackling, muffled hearing, dizziness, nausea, and fatigue may occur after surgery. These symptoms should gradually improve over the first several days.
- **Medications:** You may use paracetamol and ibuprofen for discomfort, as directed.
- **Nausea:** Take any prescribed anti-nausea medication as directed. Contact the office if nausea or vomiting prevents you from keeping down fluids or medications.

Ear Care

- **Drainage:** It is normal for the ear canal to ooze dark, bloody fluid for the first few days. Place a cotton ball at the opening of the ear canal to collect drainage; change it as often as needed. Do not push the cotton ball deeply into the ear canal.
- **Ear Packing:** Packing deeper in the ear canal will remain in place for 1-2 weeks. Your surgeon will remove it. Do not pull on or attempt to remove the packing. Do not be alarmed if a small amount comes out before your follow-up visit.
- **Ear Drops:** If you receive a prescription for ear drops or a bottle of drops, begin using them the day after surgery. Place 3 drops into the surgical ear twice daily, unless otherwise instructed. Continue until your postoperative visit, when the packing may be removed.
- **Keep the Ear Dry:** Keep the surgical ear dry when showering. Use a cotton ball coated with petroleum jelly (Vaseline) at the ear opening, or wear a shower cap. Do not allow water to enter the ear canal.
- **Incision Care:** If you have an incision behind the ear, it may get wet in the shower after 48 hours. Apply petroleum jelly (Vaseline) to the incision twice daily until it has fully healed. Do not soak, scrub, or pick at the incision.

Activity

- Rest on the day of surgery. Light activity is encouraged as tolerated.
- Avoid heavy lifting, straining, vigorous exercise, and bending with your head below your waist until cleared by your surgeon.
- Avoid forceful nose blowing. If you need to sneeze, sneeze with your mouth open.
- Avoid air travel, scuba diving, water sports, and submerging your head underwater until cleared by your surgeon.
- You may return to work or school when you feel ready. Work involving dirt exposure, heavy physical activity, or tasks requiring reliable hearing or balance for safety may need to be delayed until healing is more complete.

Hearing and Balance

- You should expect muffled hearing in the surgical ear until the packing has been removed or dissolved.

- Mild dizziness may occur after ear surgery. Move slowly when getting out of bed or changing position. Do not drive if you are dizzy, taking sedating pain medication, or unable to safely control a vehicle.
- Smoking and vaping impair healing and may compromise the result of surgery. Please avoid smoking and vaping during recovery.

Post-Operative Appointment

- A follow-up visit will be scheduled as directed by your surgeon, often within the first postoperative week.
- At this visit, your surgeon will assess healing, review symptoms, and remove or assess ear canal packing as appropriate.

When to Call the Doctor

- Fever over 38.5°C
- Facial weakness on the side of surgery
- Severe, worsening, or persistent dizziness or vertigo
- Severe nausea or vomiting with inability to keep down food, fluids, or medication
- A migraine flare that does not improve with your usual treatment
- Increasing redness, swelling, pain, pus-like drainage, or separation of the incision behind the ear
- Persistent bright-red bleeding or drainage that is increasing rather than improving
- New severe headache, neck stiffness, confusion, or weakness
- Signs of dehydration, including very dark urine, minimal urination, or unusual sleepiness

Contact Information

- **Non-Urgent Questions:** Call the office at 03 548 4994.
- **Urgent Concerns:** Contact Dr. Slough directly. Leave a message or text if there is no immediate response, especially during operations or after hours.